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A WARRANT

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

BY

F. THAUMAZO

BROOKLYN, N. Y.
1909

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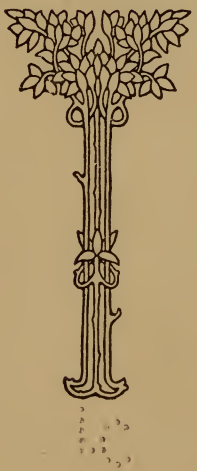

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

1909

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by

FREDERICK LOEVIUS

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DEDICATED

MOST AFFECTIONATELY

TO MY FRIEND

DR. MAURICE TEN BRINK

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

Irving Combden.
Mildred Combden, his wife.
Mr. Worthington, her father.
Mrs. Worthington, her mother.
Gus, her brother.
Kate Hennessey.
James Worthington.
Cutler, Litchfield, Ruby Hart } Irving's friends.
Dr. Martin.
Dr. Pump-Nickel, nicknamed "uncle Henri".
Mishelle.
Seven Prisoners.
Two Women-Missionaries.
Four Boys.
A Keeper.
A Detective.
A Messenger boy.
A Servant.
Prisoners.
Officers of the Police.

Time: Begin of twentieth century.

Place of action: New York.

I. ACT.

A neatly, but not richly furnished room representing Parlor and Library, one side-door leads to hall, the other to rooms; in rear of stage are windows to street. Mildred Combden and Dr. Martin sitting at table.

Dr. Martin. As I said before, madam, I do not regret the fact that Mr. Combden has left the hospital.

Mrs. Combden. Still, I remember how the directors praised him while he was superintending it.

Dr. Martin. You are right. But that was a mistake of course. Anybody is liable to make a mistake, you know. There is more ease, though, since his absence. He was too nervous, you understand. He was all that you call a crank. We have learned to be more careful in selecting a new superintendent. That person must be trustworthy: we have to rely on him so much. Your husband—

Mrs. Combden (interrupting with surprise). My husband? He did not—?

Dr. Martin. No, no, of course, he did not. But he never cared to go into the details of the expenses.

Mrs. Combden (curiously). Pardon, Doctor. He left after a scandal. Did he not?

Dr. Martin. Exactly. His exposé of matters of delicacy had reached the public ear.

Mrs. Combden. Has your visit any relations to this matter? Or did you come to beg of him to resume the position?

Dr. Martin. I am sorry if I disappoint you. But I have not come with that purpose. You know, that quite an intimate friendship exists between me and your brother, and you will permit me to extend the same to his only sister. Especially, since I can be of service to you.

Mrs. Combden (affecting surprise). To me? I am delighted, Doctor. Yet I am puzzled.

Dr. Martin. Yes, to you, Mrs. Combden. And because,—I don't want to keep you in suspense—because I must warn you.

Mrs. Combden. Indeed, Doctor, you cannot explain quickly enough.

Dr. Martin. Your husband, Mrs. Combden, is—prepared—well, I hardly have the audacity to say it.

Mrs. Combden. To leave me? Speak it out, Doctor.

Dr. Martin. Now, I did not—say that.

Mrs. Combden. But—

Dr. Martin. You seem to know your husband's intentions.

Mrs. Combden (spitefully). Oh, I do! And I shall be prepared. Speak frankly. I will not abuse your confidence.

Dr. Martin. You cannot hold me responsible, Mrs. Combden. I did not say anything.

Mrs. Combden. This is the way you men always treat us. We give our confidence and you return suspicion.

Dr. Martin. Well, Mrs. Combden. You must understand, Mrs. Combden, I am very sorry for you. Therefore, excuse my questions if they be bold. Was there anything like moral force you brought to bear on Mr. Combden—

Mrs. Comden. Go ahead, Doctor. (With sarcasm.) I see you are one of the initiated.

Dr. Martin. Yes, he told me. You know, we were quite chums. But I now understand that you are suffering under very distressed circumstances. I also know about his intentions. To be silent is to invite crime. My advice could avert a possible misfortune. I, therefore, urge you, madam, to apply at the proper authorities.

Mrs. Combden. I thank you very much, Doctor. My own reflections have brought me to the same conclusions. But I should have to wait till he abandoned me.

Dr. Martin. Not necessarily. If your husband utters a threat, and you understand, it is to your interest that he does—you can have him—well—say—

Mrs. Combden. Arrested? Is it not? Horrible!

Dr. Martin (rising). You will not be the first woman that served herself well by making the time suitable to herself. After all, this is your affair. I have done my duty. I have warned you.

Mrs. Combden. I am sorry that I am not able to detain you. But I fear, Irving might insult you if he met you here. I am quite used to such scenes.

Dr. Martin (indignantly). How vile!

Mrs. Combden. Why, he threatened to kill anybody who happens to visit me without his knowledge.

Dr. Martin. Good by, Mrs. Combden. (Exit.)

Gus. Worthington and Kate Hennessey appear as soon as Doctor Martin has left Mrs. Combden.

Mrs. Combden. You knew who was here?

Gus. Why, I heard the most part of the conversation. Does he not corroborate my assertions? Mildred, I hope, he has not spoken in vain and you will act on his advice.

Mrs. Combden. But how can I do it?

Gus. I and Irving are on very strained relations. I cannot arrange matters personally.

Miss Hennessey. What did you intend to do?

Mrs. Combden. Ask Mr. Combden, whether he really intended to leave me.

Miss Hennessey. Rely on me, Mrs. Combden. My endeavors shall satisfy you.

Gus. I knew that you are my sisters as well my friend.

Miss Hennessey. And I am sure, my dear Gus, that I am worthy of both her friendship and confidence. You will find, Mrs. Combden, that I am worthy of your brother's affection.

Mrs. Combden. I never doubted it.

Gus (rudely affectionate). Oh, Kate, what unnecessary assurances!

Mrs. Combden. Stay with us, Miss Hennessey. He seems always cheerful in your presence.

Gus. I am leaving you. We are expecting you at home to-night, Kate.

Miss Hennessey. I accept the invitation gladly, Gus.

Gus. So long! (Exit.)

Mrs. Combden. There must come an end to all that. Mind, he is getting jealous. Imagine his temper in such a state of insanity! One cannot receive anybody without hiding that fact from him. Should he, perchance, become aware of things taking place here he dislikes, he might be driven to commit some irresponsible deed. There must be made an end to all that.

Miss Hennessey. That creature! He has no property?

Mrs. Combden. He has nothing. But I am well advised.

Miss Hennessey. He deserves all he can get.

Mrs. Combden. You remember how he used to repeat: Miss Worthington, you are a good girl.

Miss Hennessey. And, certainly, you were good to him.

Mrs. Combden (offended). But he paid the penalty.

Miss Hennessey (dryly.) And how happy you are!

Mrs. Combden (suppressing her anger). I hold my fate in my hands. But while I will be free and happy he shall work in all the sweat of his misery and degradation—and for me. Ah, how he will like it! To be married and not have a wife, to support a woman and not get the comforts of wedlock.

Miss Hennessey. Serves him right, that bold thing. Thinks there be nothing good enough in our society.

Mrs. Combden. Tell him—I hear his steps—you had heard he wanted to depart. You are smart enough—I need not instruct you.

Miss Hennessey. Leave it to me.

Irving, entering, puts hat on desk and shakes hands with Miss Hennessey.

Irving (cordially). Quite a surprice, Miss Hennessey.

Miss Hennessey. Why, Mr. Combden, since you do not care to come to us, we must needs visit you.

Irving. I, really, have no time left for paying visits. I have no time for recreation. I feel worn out. I sometimes think I ought to lie down and take a deep breath and get a rest.

Miss Hennessey. You ought to remember, Mr. Combden, that gossip is a busy chatter. You never are seen with Mrs. Combden, and the Worthingtons feel the slight. The world is full of rumors.

Irving. Oh, again the old story. The world! What is it! Your gossiping friends, your deriding neighbors, your vain relatives who imagine that the napkin or the kitchen set they have surprised you with on your wedding day insures their right to interfere with your doings and sayings, with all your affairs and opinions. You have to leave that world, to find yourself.

Mrs. Combden. But one cannot live all by oneself.

Irving looks at her meditatingly, turns away.

Miss Hennessey. Since when are you an enemy of the world?

Irving. I am far from being an enemy of the world. But I object to the petty kindness of some people that like to go through the pockets of your clothes in search of a petty secret. It is the ignorant suspicion of petty souls that I object to. And, furthermore, (standing in front of Miss Hennessey, with tremulous voice) to listen to the criticisms of a miserable lot of inquirers and false prophets, is more than my self-respect can stand. If one does not become mad in such a world, he, certainly, becomes miserably indifferent (walks up and down, agitated).

Mrs. Combden. Come and look at our baby, Miss Hennessey.

Mrs. Combden and Miss Hennessey leave. Irving alone.

On a new mission of espionage. Contemptible lot! See the baby!—Poor, poor child! Surely, he had no bath to-day. (Goes into next room, returns soon). Out all day, dragging the babe along. And whither goes she? Complains here, tears there! Oh, I am a regular monster. No house of servants, no equipage, no box in the opera. (Bitterly laughing). Ha, ha, what a monster I am.—But, patience. One more year and we shall live in more luxurious surroundings. One more year of hard labor. One long, dreary year, no peace within your own four walls, no glimpse of cheerful calmness. Perhaps she'd take pride in my name. My work will attract attention, I shall work every night. (Sits down at the desk, reads and makes notes). "Happiness to gain by liberating the soul from all sensual cupidity and imagination!" Ah, Plato, to what amounts the soul in a married man. We are all dummies, and whoever is none will be unhappy, ridiculed, and shoved aside.

Miss Hennessey returns.

Miss Hennessey. What a wonderful baby!

Irving (in thoughts). Yes.

Miss Hennessey. Yet—rather delicate.

Irving (as above, nodding).

Miss Hennessey. I suppose, like all fathers you have great illusions about it.

Irving (turning around). I leave them to the happier sex.

Miss Hennessey. I am sure, you are happy.

Irving (trying to smile). Oh, how happy!

Miss Hennessey. You have reasons for it. Such a good wife, such worthy relations, such a darling child! Yet you look as though you had grave thoughts about the future.

Irving. Ha, ha, you are an excellent critic. (Aside.) I'll put pepper into that dish of suspicion.

Miss Hennessey. What a flatterer you are. But we know each other too well.

Irving. I know you well, Miss Hennessey. I can read your thoughts.

Miss Hennessey (resolutely). Then guess my present thought.

Irving (pacing up and down, agitated, standing before her). I guess it. You are thinking this very moment, that I am about to leave the baby to his mother and the mother to her fate, and that I will save my life from the damnation of her circle by removing to a distance yet unknown to you. Ha, ha, you see how well I am informed about what is going on around me.

Miss Hennessey. No, Mr. Combden, it is impossible. You can not do it. Think of the unhappy lot—!

Irving (with affected indifference). Nonsense, I never stop to consider the lot of others. I busy myself about my own affairs.

Miss Hennessey. But how can you ever be happy when your conscience will bear such crime.

Irving. Crime has no conscience. Fellows like me laugh at what you fear.

Miss Hennessey (in tears). I know, you do not mean it.

Irving. Why, my dear Miss Hennessey, I mean what I say.

Miss Hennessey. And will you tell your wife of your intentions?

Irving. Now, do not take me for a fool. I might tell her. You know, I am frank and can not have secrets. But I will tell her only at the moment I am prepared to go.

Mrs. Combden enters.

Mrs. Combden. Why in tears, Miss Hennessey?

Miss Hennessey. Mr. Combden told me such a dreadful story.

Mrs. Combden. I never heard him tell any. What was it about?

Irving (ironically). In proper time comes every fruit. Have patience.

Miss Hennessey. It is getting very late. I must go. Good by.

Mrs. Combden and Miss Hennessey leave. Irving opens slowly door to inner room, enters it and soon returns with baby in arms.

How sweet you sleep, darling. And to think that a mother of such a treasure could have thoughts entirely inimical to its safety. Innocent, little creature! I never, never leave you. My smiling boy! Happy not know your father's misery and not to feel those pangs of love that finds no echo in a loved one's heart. Oh, how good nursing should invigorate you. Poor, poor thing! (listening.) She comes (kisses baby). Sleep, honey! (Enters next room, returns alone.)

While Irving was out, Mildred has come in. Right after Irving returns, and, ignoring her, goes to his desk.

Mrs. Combden. You want anything?
Irving (at his desk). No.
Mrs. Combden. You had no supper.
Irving. I had enough.
Mrs. Combden. Good night!

She leaves, Irving looks meditatingly at door through which she disappeared. After walking up and down a few minutes, he sits down at desk.

Irving (writing). And that is my wife! So cold, so strangely indifferent.

Mrs. Combden appears in nightgown, pretends to busy herself, approaches him.

Irving (looking up). I thought you went to bed.
Mrs. Combden. I cannot sleep.
Irving. Hm.
Mrs. Combden. Irving.
Irving. Yes, dear.

Mrs. Combden. I wanted to speak to you.

Irving. But no tears!

Mrs. Combden. I wanted to ask you (agitated)—

Irving. I thought you wanted to speak to me.

Mrs. Combden (crying). Irving, what are you going to do?

Irving (mildly). Please stop crying and let us talk.

Mrs. Combden (as above). Think of our child!

Irving (agitated). No scene, please.

Mrs. Combden (as above). See, how unhappy you have made me!

Irving (rising and taking his hat). You fairly drive me out.

Mrs. Combden (calm). Go, I know I can not hold you.

Irving (sits down again). You could save yourself and me all this unnecessary excitement if you would banish that sneaking suspicion. It invites worry and upsets your mind.

Mrs. Combden. That is your suspicion. You never listen.

Irving. No, no, your are my good girl Mildred. They want to kill our happiness. Do not listen to them.

Mrs. Combden (with subdued sobs). If I were sure of your love, I would close my door to the rest of the world. Oh, Irving, how they hunt me!

Irving (taking her on his lap). Poor, poor Mildred. I admit I have wronged you. I have been cold to you. But you torment me with your tears. Does it never occur to you that suspicious inquiries could hurt my sentiments of honor? No, my girl, you need not close your door to the rest of the world. But you assure your visitors that they will be treated hospitably here if they bring an open face, an open heart with them.

Bell rings. Mrs. Combden retires.
James Worthington and Gus enter.

Worthington. Rather late.

Irving. You are right. But welcome!

Worthington. Well, thought I, Irving is certainly a most happy man. Thinking of nobody but his little beloved wife. What wonder! Since it is the best girl I ever knew, you carried off.

Irving. But would you not like to take your coat off?

Worthington. It is late. I suppose you are soon to retire?

Irving. Do not mind it. I was just going to read a little.

Worthington. If you insist (takes coat off).

Irving. And now I'll prepare a cup of tea. It is the best I can offer on this cool spring evening.

Worthington. Not for me. I shall not drink anything.

Irving. It is soon done.

Worthington. You are too kind. Sit down and let us have a litte chat.

Irving. Allright. Let us have a little chat. I have not seen you for some time.

Worthington. That's just why I came around. And since you know what interest I take in my brother's child, you will find it pardonable when I wanted to bathe my old heart in this garden of contentment.

They sit down.

Irving (aside). What diplomacy! (aloud) Rather a dry bath and quite a miracle.

Worthington. Though I know that the working of a miracle is not a part of your admiration, I want to remind you of the words of one great statesman well versed in all modern sciences and literature— —

Irving. I do not think that a statesman whose deepest belief is in the credulity of the masses knows of another miracle than the vote. As to science and literature—these subjects are inimical to his interests.

Worthington. There is a good deal of truth in your words. And they fill my heart with real joy. For a man who speaks thus most certainly acts likewise, and

weighs with never ceasing intelligence and accuracy the steps he is about to take.

Irving. I could not walk far if I did it. I should have to take the feet in my hands in order to weigh my steps.

Worthington. You are modest. And, therefore, your value grows in my eyes.

Irving. Please, do not view me through a microscope.

Gus. You seem to be amused.

Irving. So I am. But do not participate in the conversation. You cut it short. Now, then! What is your object. Let us not dance round the fire. Your little nephew is sleepy. He nearly caught fire.

Gus meets a wink from Mr. Worthington and leans back in chair.

Worthington. Object? If you call my inquiry as to your happiness and welfare an object,—

Irving. You were sure of it when you entered. What makes you doubt it now?

Worthington. I do not exactly doubt it. But I should have expected to find your wife with you.

Irving. She is in bed, and I was studying.

Worthington. Glad to hear it. That means you are making plenty of money. While Mildred stayed with her parents during the holidays, she told us about it.

Gus. And why, if this be the case, do you not provide her with more comfort?

Irving. I never refuse her anything that I can afford to supply her with.

Gus. What a joke!

Irving. You are a very foolish fellow.

Gus. Because I do not live like that fellow in the barrel? (Showing at pocket.) I am up to date!

Irving. Oh, your brain is in your pocket. I know it. Your skull can not coin anything but money. But now I shall talk business. (Sternly.) I perceive now that my wife has utilized the holidays in the house of her parents for an explanation of her various grievances, has implored your wise action and has painted me devilishly

black. You have come to-night with an object. Now, Mr. Worthington, sit still, please. Let me tell you that I shall not listen to any propositions from you or anybody else. I am resolved to treat all such interference with the contempt that imprudence and cant deserve. She has her own tongue to speak with, and her own will to act upon. You are cruel.

Worthington. Excuse me. But you speak of cruelty. Do you not treat your wife cruelly? But since I know that your real sentiments are noble, and that this connection has only made you so miserably unhappy, that you are hardly aware of the injustice you are treating her with, I came to offer you my advice and, if necessary, my money—to escape from this dilemma. You earn a good salary, you could make a finer living. Let us say, unhappy circumstances prevent it. The best intentions have been tried and have failed. You know it as well as I, and you ask yourself: What is the next step?

Irving. You are wrong. My position is very clear to me. But you are laboring under delusions.

Gus. You do not intend keeping her in this prison all her life?

Irving (scornfully). If this be a prison to her—she may go.

Worthington. Go! This is a matter which must be legally settled.

Irving (indignant). Enough, I say. If she has tired of me, she may go. I shall never claim her, never interfere with her. If she so demands it—I shall go.

Worthington. Remember, she is young. She does not intend burying her hopes. A mere word— —

Irving rises suddenly.

Irving (as above). A mere word is nothing to you! It is all to me. The legal settlement would be but the introduction to a drama for which the uncle is kind enough to act as manager. (Resolved.) I have been a fool, but now I am prepared to meet you on equal grounds. I have treated you politely; you deserve contempt. I demand that you leave me. (Pointing at door.)

Worthington. I am, as yet, in the house of my niece.

Irving. I command you to go, to go this very minute.

Worthington. Let us agree upon a settlement.

Worthington and Gus leave their seats.

Irving. Settlement? (In rage.) I am not frightened by the dignity of your bombastic phrases. And every tie of unison is torn; your interference has torn it. Mind, torn every tie. That unscrupulous woman abides by your counsel. By your counsel! Oh, mischief and lie are your weapons. It has an end. (Closing desk.) And if you have not gone within two minutes, (taking his hat) you will force me to leave—never to return.

Mrs. Combden, half fainting, sits down.

Mrs. Combden. Dear Irving!

Irving. Ah. that makes the worthy set complete.

Worthington. Your actions convince me that you are a companion unfit to associate any longer with my niece.

Irving. Make haste!

Worthington (at door). You'll regret it!

Worthington and Gus leave.

Irving locks door, sinks exhausted into chair and covers his face with hand. Mrs. Combden bends down before him.

Irving (suddenly jumps up). Viper! (Points to door).

Mrs. Combden slowly walks away, sobbing. Irving falls into chair.

II. ACT.

A doctor's office luxuriously furnished. A case with instruments, another with various small bottles containing medicines, Books. One side door leads to inner rooms, one to vestibule; middle door to waiting room.

Cutler and Dr. Pump-Nickel.

Cutler. He very seldom visits you?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. If he visits anybody, Irving visits me, his friend. He knows well his friend. Why, after his discharge from the hospital, he sat daily with me here and had supper with me. If he wants an advice, this is the place he looks for, and if he has a secret, this is the ear he confides it to.

Cutler. Into what miserable a pith he has fallen. And, I understand, you had a hand in it.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. He is not very happy. But his own conscience led him to that course. It was. though, not all done lege artis. There was an abundance of her volumen (describing circumference) contra his errors and, as he felt in honor bound to restore the balance and, yet, was unable to reduce her volumen, he was convinced of the necessity of throwing his whole value in the counterpois.

Cutler. He never yielded to my advice. I warned him. And yet, indirectly, I am to blame for all his troubles.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Come on. You know what interest I take in Irving. And, also, what kind of a man I am. I told you how it happened, that they got married. Treat me with the same confidence and tell me of the part you took in the affair. Discretion, of course, is a matter of honor.

Cutler. There is no secret about it, uncle Henri. I might as well recall the incident. We were having a jolly good time. It was a beautiful, dry, starry winters

night. We had had quite a friendly chat in the company of a juicy steak and a sparkling bottle of wine. We were too animated to depart from each other and return home.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Wine is good, a steak more to my taste, and a girl— —

Cutler. And a soft-lipped and cheerful woman is best. Jubilant in the glory of our intimacy and good nature, we talked friendly of everybody and amused ourselves with everything. Irving, suddenly, full of an enthusiasm that sometimes carries him off into exalted illusions, felt a burning desire to finish this night's joy with a piece of out-of-the-ordinary romantic adventure. "You need not look far," said I, "were I in your boots, I'd whistle my serenade at the window of a certain girl, and the next minute should find me in her arms." "Quite easy," said he, "and be sure, I have the courage of a Marat and should not hesitate to storm a bastille to accomplish this final triumph. What is her name, and where is the place?" Thereupon I and the other comrades made merry, for we could not realize that he did nto know whom we meant. Finally I mentioned Miss Mildred Worthington's name. Holy child of sterility! How transformed was he instantly. He cast a glance at each of us, a glance that I never shall forget—so full of horrified significance. "I see, you are in an irresponsible condition," said he. And he hurried away.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. And since then you never met?

Cutler. Very seldom. And, try as I may, to approach him in the old confidential style of comrades—he coolly satisfied himself with saluting me and passing by.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Always the same.

Servant (opening door to waiting room). Doctor, there is a lady here that's very nervous.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Nervous, eh? A morphine or cocainefiend, I suppose. Will be right back. (Exit.)

Cutler. (Alone.) I have been wrongly informed. He is innocent.

Ruby Hart enters with Dr. Pump-Nickel.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Mr. Cutler is no stranger to you. What a glorious day!

Cutler (shaking her hand and leading her to chair). Indeed, a promising day. We have not met for some time.

Ruby Hart. Who wants to be bothered with the company of an old spinster? (Refuses the seat.)

Dr. Pump-Nickel. He, he, a nice species of a spinster.

Ruby Hart. I prefer to be a spinster. The perfect maturity promises more intellect than a half developed freshness. But it is not compliments I have come to exchange. Strange as it may seem to you, I carry the salvation of a friend on my tongue, and I want to engage your help. I can speak frankly to you, for you both are friends of Mr. Combden.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. They consider me his best friend.

Cutler. I bear no grudge against him, but he dislikes me.

Ruby Hart. Forgive him, if he ever insulted you. I know him well, (turning away; passionately). And I for forgave him, for he needs friends.

Cutler (taking her hands). Ah, Miss Ruby Hart, how could he turn away from you!

Ruby Hart. And why not? Is he not his own master? I honor him still. Because his is a heart filled with the tenderest sentiments; his is an ideal glorying in all the magnificence of bright confidence and hope for mankind; his is a judgment, the sword of which cuts his own soul deeper than that of the abusers'. But his is a temperament that belies his very nature: and his diabolically fiery nerve bends itself to destroy his gifted life. And what I have feared is going to happen. His wife, not capable of explaining his ways, has decided to part from him, but to secure his public humiliation first. Oh. Mr. Combden can not stand it.

Cutler. Speak out, Miss Hart. He has everything I own and am at his disposal.

Miss Hart. I knew it. But let us go on. My father is one of the directors of the hospital of which

Irving, till recently, was the superintendent. From another director he heard what is going to befall our friend, and, suspecting me of malice, he related it to me. His wife has taken out a warrant against Irving and he has no property, no security.—

Cutler (indignant). A warrant? Just like them. Market people. Onions and garlic.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Dr. Martin is planning revenge for the exposure. Irving has acted imprudently.

Cutler. He has acted manly.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Reputation is the first principle of a business. And prudence the first maxim of a citizen.

Cutler. Do you fear for your reputation? Then leave this matter to us. Prudence ought to forbid you to associate yourself with us in a beginning which could spoil your reputation with the Worthingtons and that sort.

Ruby Hart. You will not betray us, Doctor?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Rest assured, Miss Hart, Irving is my friend.

Ruby Hart. Will you act?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Instantly. What can I do?

Ruby Hart. Go and tell him of the warrant. (Reflecting.) Tell me, where I can find him. I want to be sure of the accomplishment of an act that suffers no delay.

Cutler. He is a bookkeeper in some scorpions office.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I can not find his card. Rely on me. I'll find him.

Ruby Hart. Pray, Doctor, never reflect twice before you extend a helping hand.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I can not remember the number of the office.

Cutler. Is it not in the Hermion Building?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Yes, yes.

Ruby Hart. I shall go through the building and find him.

Dr. Pump-Nickel (taking card from table). Here it is.

Ruby Hart. Good by! (Exit.)

Cutler (fixing the doctor). What have you to do with it? Are you simply a miserable business man or a wilful gamester? Since when date your illfeelings against Irving?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Man, you are disgusting me. What can I have against him? Take a dose of morphine and get quiet, or a tablet of strychnine. That girl upsets your nerves. Go on, have a smoke and puff your suspicions away.

Bell rings.

Dr. Pump-Nickel opens door to vestibule. Soon after Mrs. Combden and Gus appear. The newcomers show uneasiness at sight of Cutler who faces them calmly.

Mrs. Combden. I was quite free in visiting you out of office hours.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Just make yourself at home. I am really delighted at your show of friendship.

Mrs. Combden. I know you are a gentleman, and thus I am encouraged to treat you with familiarity.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Sit down, please. (Introducing.) Mrs. Combden, Mr. Worthington, Mr. Cutler.

Gus. No need of any introduction. We know Mr. Cutler too well.

Cutler. But not well enough, it seems, to understand your position in his presence.

Gus. My position? I have never blotted the fair name of anybody like somebody else.

Cutler. Like Mr. Cutler, for instance. Now, my good man, if ever I have abused anybody's name in abusive terms—it was not the owner's of a fair one.

Gus. Are you alluding to my sister, sir?

Cutler (calmly). I am alluding to anybody.

Mrs. Combden. Let it be enough.

Gus. You will be called to vindicate yourself.

Cutler. At your service. Will be exceedingly happy for the opportunity. Good by! (Exit.)

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Do not mind him. He is a ruffian.

Mrs. Combden. Now, Doctor, let me explain our coming here. My brother, having some matters of transaction with my husband's employer, was quite astonished at not finding Irving there. Upon his solicitation he was told Irving had felt too ill and was permitted to take a day off. You can imagine my grief, after listening to such news, to not find him at home and in the proper care of his wife. In my plight I did not know what doing. I hope nothing has befallen him. And so, remembering the warm sympathy of our mutual friend, I bethought myself of the possibility of finding him here, in your care.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. He was not here. But while I deeply deplore the cause of your anxiety, more so, since you meet here with disappointment, I heartily rejoice in your approval of my sympathy. I am your friend, madame, as you well know, and I shall serve you, as such, with pleasure. If there be anything you wish me to do— —

Mrs. Combden. There is nothing, Doctor, that I wished you to do. I hoped to find him here and take him home. Or learn from you of his whereabouts.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I assure you again, madame, he was not here.

Mrs. Combden. I know you will not hide it from me. If you knew how unhappy I am, but, in spite of all misfortune, am bent on bringing about a through happiness in our dual life, that should be one, if it occurs to you, that the future of a baby is a sacred duty to not only father and mother, but to every right thinking man and woman, oh! you could not, then, look on with indifference while a rolling avalanche threatens to bury the very existence of a family under its crushing weight.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Is it as bad as all that?

Mrs. Combden (nodding). It is.

Gus. Can you tell where Irving is.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I have not seen him for some time, sir.

Mrs. Combden (wiping tears). Perhaps, you can aid me.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Well, I really do not—quite see.

Mrs. Combden. You belonged to his friends who persuaded him to marry me, and made me believe he loved me. I appeal to your honesty, Doctor. I have been deceived.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I am sure, he loves you still.

Mrs. Combden. But he is cruel—Yet, Irving is a good-hearted fellow. It is the company of such degenerates, as Mr. Cutler, that spoils him. But is one a man who throws his family aside for the sake of some friend?

Dr. Pump-Nickel (reflecting). Hm—indeed—you are on the right track.

Mrs. Combden. I could forgive him. I do not care to cause him such sorrow, as relations are desirous of troubling him with. If I'll see him to-day, I shall be calm, nay, I shall be gentle as never before, and I know he will forget the past.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. There—are—circumstances. Do you remember Miss Ruby Hart?

Gus. Ah!

Mrs. Combden (agitated, yet calm). And— —?

Mrs. Combden is listening attentively to noise from side door, whither she had gone as though in search of something.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Miss Ruby Hart was here to-day and spoke of Irving.

Mrs. Combden (agitated, suddenly returns to the other side where Gus and Doctor are). How foolish I am! Did I not want to forgive and forget? As for that woman—she is too common a thing to take up any of our time, and (quickly turning to middle entrance) if it be for her sake, that he neglects his matrimonial duties, I can rest assured that his will not be the happier lot. I

bid you goodby, Doctor. Guard our confidence with silence.

Doctor, Gus, and Mrs. Combden leave through middle door.
Irving and Litchfield enter through side door.

Irving. There cannot be anything more stupid than the blind belief in an authority. Never trust a word. Always doubt it. Never take a truth for granted unless your mind has totally conceived it, and then be ready to defend it. It really pains me to listen to a student. One could rather suffer the acrobatic hallucinations of an illiterate who flies in a jiffy from earths painful misery to heavens golden promises.

Litchfield. You are a skeptic.

Irving. It is not worth while wrecking ones brain to find it out. I am simply a sentimental fool. For fellows like me the task of sinking into positive researches is very hard. We are amidst a yawling crowd and cannot collect our thoughts; we yell like the rest. Our mind is like the wind that whizzes through the trembling trees over a meadow; it is like the breeze that blows the sand up over the housetops of the village road; like a whining storm that sweeps over hill and bush and forest,—first meekly crying its agony, then whistling despair and misery from a thousand tired and dried gigantic lungs, and finally throwing its fury and rage over the habitations of mankind, tearing and smashing and rolling away its resources, and stunning the wondering world into stupidity. Calmly and slowly and carefully do we weigh our convictions and answers, while no pain has smitten our passions. We stagger in stagnation as a sudden adversity props up to threaten our progress. We take a deep breath of indignation and courage to throw down all resolute opposition, and once fixed with the passion of rage, do not philosophize as to the harm we harvest or to the injustice we incur. To be ever calm and dispassionate is to be ever reminded by the alertness of an undisturbed tranquility of the soul, means to be ever unmolested by any sentiments of love and hatred. And do not praise me that soul!

Litchfield. Shades of Plato and Aristotle! Your wisest counsels are ignored by pour best pupils. Oh, the sentiments of love and hatred were not known to you!

Irving. Why confuse ideal godliness with pain-ridden humankind! We do all not to suffer and not to fear, said other wise men of Greece. And just so, my friend. And in order to live without suffering and fear, let us in time of need and obstruction conquer the enemy that creates them. Let us be human and enjoy our human weaknesses, if they be pleasureable, moderately and wisely, but let us never forget to build upon our human magnitude and let us not permit our bestial masters to prescribe for us.

Litchfield. And yet, one could continually doubt; and find the foregoing premises wrong. And you can never reach the goal of absolute truth.

Irving. You are a philosopher, and as such doubt; doubt is a factor you cannot do without. Doubt is but so long permissible as knowledge will uphold it. But beyond that—doubt is the mother of suspicion, and suspicion is a field bedecked with lightning bugs. You may stand on the road and gaze at the glimmering lights yonder. You may delight in the dreamy probability of a wondrous city waiting there, filled with brilliant spectacles. But as you proceed to approach it, you will sink into the poisonous mud of a pestiferous meadow.

Litchfield. And still—with all your armor of knowledge, you are not happy. Doubt has not satisfied you.

Irving. If carefully weighed, it has saved me from a great many disappointments. But the thoughtful mind has too much to deplore within the sphere of conventionality and force; it has too often to withdraw from pleasure. Acquaintances, friends, love, and lore are not for him who knows them best, for their thoroughness is lacking. The thoughtful man seems to possess strange moods, to walk strange ways. And the world is strange to the man of strange ways and mood. The thoughtless are the happy people, and are well received.

Litchfield. You have not always spoken thus. You are overworked, and I advise you to abstain from your nightly studies.

Irving. Just a little nervous. The scene of last night will not leave my mind.

Litchfield. Come, Irving, divert your mind. And then go home and speak calmly to her, and make up.

Irving. Oh, if I could! But that cold eye, that affected mannerism, that reticent answer, that calculated behavior of Mildred freeze my tongue. (After a pause, resolute.) Still, I will go. She will love me the more for this frankness. Doubt shall not point to danger and disappointment, doubt shall not sneer my happiness away.

Dr. Pump-Nickel returns.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. What criminal negligence!

Irving. What excitement! And no good-morning!

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Why, your wife just left me.

Irving. Mildred here?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. You talked so loud that she recognized your voice.

Irving. But she did not listen to our conversation?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I wish you had less courage and more forethought. Satisfied to know you in the house, she hurried off.

Irving. What was the nature of her visit?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. She heard you were sick and was careworn.

Irving. Ah, I must run home! (Going to door.)

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I thought you were to leave the city.

Irving. I—leave the city? Nonsense.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I advise you to do it.

Irving (returning). And why?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. To give her time. She ought to be left alone for a while. She might, then, recognize her mistake.

Irving. Riddles and nothing but riddles. As a matter of fact, if anyone of us has made a mistake, it was I.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Yet, I advise you to leave. You know, I am your friend.

Litchfield. If it be impossible to adjust matters otherwise, the only conclusive step to take, would be a suit for divorce.

Irving. Never!

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Litchfield's advice is good. And the Worthingtons will readily name and pay for a correspondent.

Irving. Dirty, too dirty.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Did you not receive at the office the visit of some of your friends to-day?

Irving. No, I did not. But why?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I merely ask. Mrs. Combden meant some lady friend might wish to interfere.

Irving (restless). There must be something in all that. Mildred here, advice to leave, a lady friend. A warning, suspicion, jealously. The Worthingtons are capable of doing anything for revenge. But she is my wife. She is a mother; the mother of my child. She cannot array herself against me, against her husband, against the father of her child,—because the uncle demands it.—No, no, uncle Henri, you see ghosts. I do not doubt your friendship. But you see ghosts. You cannot feel the heartache of a father, nor his joy, his hope, his strength. You have never appeased a pitifully shrieking baby in your arms. The winning smile from tiny lips has never thanked you.

Servant (announcing). A gentleman wishes to see Mr. Combden.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Send him in! (Servant opens door, exit.)

A Detective enters.

Detective (approaching Irving). Is your name Irving Combden?

Irving. Yes, sir.

Detective. I have here a warrant for you arrest.

Litchfield (seizing arm of Irving). Impossible!

Irving (determined). Well!

Detective. Issued on the request of Mrs. Mildred Combden.

Irving (pained). And why?

Detective. Can I speak to you alone?

Dr. Pump-Nickel meets the eye of Irving Combden and turns away abashed.

Irving (aside with Detective). What can I do?

Detective. The accusations are of the meanest nature. But I am sorry for you, because you are a gentleman. If you have a lawyer—spare no money. If you have none, I'll give you one. Prepare yourself for the worst, for the judge has made up his mind, and it will be darnd hard to say a word to your benefit. But money goes far, and my lawyer is influential.

Mr. Worthington and Mrs. Combden enter.

Mr. Worthington (shaking Dr. Pump-Nickel's hand). Doctor, you are a gentleman.

Irving. Is that your wish, Mildred, or your uncle's revenge?

Mrs. Combden. For the child's sake!

Irving (agitated). Let us go, officer!

III. ACT.

I. SCENE.

Jail. In the rear a long and broad bench, on which some prisoners lie of sit. Side door to hall, partly visible. Some prisoners walk up and down in despair. Some converse freely.

PRISONERS.

First Prison. Ha, ha, ha! I tell ye boys we'll have sport. I seen a feller wid patten ledders an' he's comin here. They've talked some darned nonsense into him but he wont listen. He's the right kind of a man, he is.

Second Prison. What's your case?

First Prison. Hello, me boy. Shake hands. Guess I seen you before over on the island, aint it?

Second Prison. On the island? Not on yer sweet life! I've always paid my fine alright. But this time, I be darned if I di'nt blow it all in. Now its fi' days for intox'cation. What's yours?

First Prison. Five days! Peanuts. I dont take less'n a months. I've kicked the stuffins out o' my wife, an' when I git out I'll make a balloon out o'her mug. You can take your oath on that!

Third Prison. By gosh! That's somethin' for somethin! But I! I've done nothin but asked for a nights free lodgin' an' they gives me tree months for vagrancy.

Fourth Prison. Dat's just where the bloomin' thing comes in, old chap. Dere aint a cold night during the winter dat I wont apply fer a free lodgin. I knows I gets tree months free lodgin from the magistrate. He's a good jackass. Dat's just the beauty. I aint goin to freeze and starve as long as we've got the jails. Not on yer tintype, Mike. Look a here. If ye want tersleep, there's yer bed,

an' they keep ye in good health, fer ye got to lie down early wid de chickens. If ye wants a bath, why dere's de douche, just take yer ready made cloths off thats better than yer own. If ye need a shave, dere's the barbershop an ye lie down like a lord an' have them niggers an' ginneys 'tend to you. If yer hungry, dere's yer grub waitin' for you three times a day an' ye eat in a hurry an' much more than ever! cause the keeper commands you dere wid the stick in his hands an' you're so excited you dont know when you're filled up. If ye want to smoke and ye got the boodle, dere are plenty o' neaks to buy tobacco from. and there's plenty o' paper in the waterclosets. If ye aint got no money, deres always some goodnatured fellow 'round that's got it an' will give you it for the askin. Giv me the island anytime I can't make me livin.

Four Boys are shoved in by Keeper.

First Boy. Let's have a game o'cards.

Second Boy (laying down on bench). I dont care.

Third Boy. Brace up, kid!

Fourth Boy (lying on bench). Dis is a hard bed.

Fourth Prison. What's the matter wid youz?

Boys. Ridin freights.

Fourth Prison. Dats the way I started. (Boastfully.) Dere aint a state dat I aint seen, and there aint a track I di'nt inspect. But dey only caught me when I wanted a lodgin. Well, dis aint the worst place. Out in Mass ye get better feed. I be darned il ye see a decent piece of meat in dis rotten hole.

First Boy. Were you ever in Colorado?

Fourth Prison. Was I? Holy jumpin Jemine! I've been all through the mines an' if I'd a cared a snap I'd a picked the golddust up by the bushel. But dem aint my sentiments. I want to travel an' see the great world, the variety o' things an' peoples, I do. But, boys, if ever ye start out in life and want to see a fat stretch o' land, go to Utah! Hell, they talk about the Mormons. Dey're

alright. Dey've got a rich land an' feed ye well and like ye an' don' sack ye right along.

Irving remains confused at door, then walks to corner.

Second Prison. Petty larceny, eh?

Irving (looks at him amazed).

Fourth Prison. Nothin' of the kind, that's intoxication.

Third Prison. Nonsense, he would a' paid the fine.

First Prison. Dey couldn't get you 'way, could dey?

Fourth Prison. I seen ye with a woman, Mister Was that yer wife?

First Prison. Here ye are—another wife case!

Fifth Prison (delirious).

Oh, show me the way to Golgotha!
Help me carry the cross.

The prisoners turn away from Irving and approach the delirious man.

Fifth Prison.

The Christians have stolen from Golgotha:
And hung 'round us the cross.

Irving (approach him). The man is trembling. He is sick, and—

First Prison. Why, he's got a deep gash in his head. I s'ppose dat's the cops mark.

Fourth Prison. Everybody wid a cop's mark belongs in here.

Sixth Prison (harmless lunatic). Did you ever see a stocking that didn't cure diphtheria? Hang it round the man's neck and he'll be well. (Showing the stocking.) I blew into my stocking and a policeman locked me up. And because I belong to Philadelphia, the judge put me in jail. But if the policeman had given me time, I should have invented the flying machine and gone home in triumph.

Fifth Prison.

It is quite many a year ago,
A tramp like you and me
Stood likewise in a prisoners woe
And died that we be free.

Oh, show me the way to Golgotha!
They hung 'round us the cross,
The Christians have stolen from Golgotha:
Take away my life and my loss!

The prisoners have surrounded the wounded man, they view him attentively, some taking off their hats, some drying their eyes. Suddenly an organ is playing in hall. Two Women appear at door. Boys whistle, Men groan and grunt.

First Woman. Now here, men, would you not, please, keep quiet for a minute and listen to the words of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ?

Fourth Prison. Git! You're no comp'ny.

He takes a ball from his shoe and plays with it off and on during the whole scene.

First Woman. Young man, let me just address to you a few words. Once, on a day like this, I met a young man of about your age in a place just like this. He was just as careless about his future and that of his soul—just like you.

Fourth Prison. Just stop just. (Men laugh.)

Fifth Prison (delirious).

The Christians have stolen from Golgotha
And hung 'round us the cross.

First Woman. I spoke to him a few words—

Fourth Prison. Just like now.

First Woman. Yes, just as I speak to you now, I asked him to open his heart to the omnipotent mercy of our Lord—

Second Woman. Blessed be His Name!

First Woman. And permit the entrance of the greatest freedom of good will to all mankind and of friendship with the world and God, that he may acquire self-reliance to sustain him in all trials and temptations—

Boys.

It is quite many a year ago,
A tramp like you and me,
Stood likewise in a prisoner's woe
And died that we be free.

First Woman. He was moved by my words and converted and returned to the loving shrine of our Lord.

Second Woman. Blessed be His Name!

First Woman. And o wonder of our Lord!

Second Woman. Blessed be His Name!

First Woman. The next time I saw him .

Fourth Prison. He had an employment office and sold any young girl that came 'long to any of your paymasters that could put up for it.

Laughter, whistling, grunts. Organ plays again.

Second Woman. My heart breaks, when I see these boys already in the clutches of the devil.

First Boy. You're an old dope. We aint done nothin'.

Second Woman. I say to you: Return, while there is time. Confess your sins trustfully and God will forgive you. Have no mercy with yourself and the Lord will have mercy with you. Kneel down before your Maker and He will raise you up. Pray to him and He will give you the strength to repair your damages.

Boys.

They used to tell a tale of love,
Of brotherhood and truth,
They've burned the tale of freedom and love
And have buried the blood of the youth.

The women leave. It is getting dark. Keeper is seen lighting hall.

First Prison. Here, Keeper!

Keeper. What's that? Lie down there now an' shut up!

Fourth Prison. Keeper, Keeper!

Keeper (at door). Well?

Chorus of Prison. You're a watchdog.

Men lie down. Irving sits in front of stage.

Irving (leaving seat). Has a common lot thrown us together to a common fate? Has the dear trust of the world, its esteem and friendship—fled from me as well as from them? Will suspicion view me quickly and reject me when good intentions and brave deeds are wanted? What have you done, Mildred! And yet, I am to blame. I played carelessly when I should have acted wisely. I gave her cold looks when she longed for warm caresses.

Keeper. Shut up there and lie down, damn fool!

Irving (sits down).

Seventh Prison (sits down next to him). Excuse me, if I interrupt you. But, I see, you do not belong here. Have you no friends to take your away?

Irving. I refused to leave this place, for reasons I cannot explain to you.

Seventh Prison. Man, you go to your ruin. I am a living example. Some twenty years ago I was a prosperous broker. My only crime was jealousy. And while in such fits I used to drink. My wife did not care for me, and, yet, I was madly infatuated with her. One day, while at home in a somewhat intoxicated stage, an officer enters and takes me to the station house. The next day I was confronted with her in the Court, and, yet stupefied and unprepared, was convicted to six months in the Workhouse. I was not given time to speak. The Magistrate had precluded that I was a brute, and that my wife was maltreated. Stubbornly I now rejected all help from my friends and resolved to make my six months. When I came out I left the city. Three years later I returned, filled with a desire to see my children, and found my wife living under the same roof with a man whom I had always suspected of being the disturber of our happiness.

I thought my beautiful girl and bright boy disgraced, and, perhaps, unhappy, and in need of their father. But I was overcome with indignation. The Courts, I knew, could not rectify matters, and I took the sword of justice in my own hands. One evening I saw the couple sitting on the veranda. I rushed up to him, grabbed him by the throat, fully prepared to choke him to death. Her screams attracted the attention of the neighborhood, I was soon again in the hands of the police. I was sent to prison for a couple years.—I have resolved to forget all about my past. But my worry over the shame of it and over the loss of my children drives me to drink. And so, whenever I have no money to pay my fine, I am sent to jail. I judge that your's is a similar case. You are young. Discard all thoughts of revenge, accept the help of your friends. Learn from my example and save yourself. Do not worry! Forget your wife, since she does not care for you. She wants you out of her way. Will you do her the favor by playing the martyr? Return to the world, but with the ambition to not load the wheel of your fortune with regrets and revenge.

Irving. To be honest, I must admit that my conduct was not proper. Still, I can forgive my wife, knowing that I have wronged her.

Seventh Prison. But you have never held up your wife for public humiliation!

Keeper. Shut up, there. No chattin' there!

Prisoner and Irving lie down.

Irving (aside). Mildred is not as bad as the other woman he spoke of.—But I can not remain here. He is right. I must return to her and clear up the mystery. Or should I never return to her, never see her? (he falls asleep.)

FIRST VISION:

A rocky shore. It is Midday. Ruby Hart comes flying down from top and falls into arms of Irving who stands near waters edge.

SECOND VISION:

Irving boards a car in country. Between trees of the road the sun is seen setting. Ruby waves handkerchief. When car is out of sight, she throws herself down upon the grass, and cries: Irving, come back!

THIRD VISION:

A dingy room. Judge points at Irving who stands with Mrs. Combden holding baby in arm before him.

Irving (madly crying). Baby! My poor baby!

Voices. Shut up!

Boys (in subdued tone).

Oh, show me the way to Golgotha!
They hung 'round us the cross,
The Christians have stolen from Golgotha:
Take away my life and my loss!

Irving awakens, jumps up, looks wildly round and falls to floor.

II. SCENE.

The Same as in First Act.

Mrs. Combden. Now that he is in prison, I fear him. The letter breathes some resolution. The freedom I hoped to gain from the Courts, might turn out to become his freedom and my torture. (Reading.) "Dear Mildred!" Why, dear? Is he trying to trap me? Are we changing arms? "A terrible mistake is made. You made the mistake; but I forgive you." How sly! "Save me if

you can, and you can if you want it." Did I not know the price for his courtesy! "I refused the help of my friends. Only my wife, who has placed me in this shameful condition, shall lift me from its dangers. As I see my future and yours" don't worry, poor boy! "and baby's, I cannot imagine but that a great calamity must follow such a thoughtless step. Save yourself and baby while saving me." Just the reverse, hubby! "If you do not wish to do it, then take care to never mention to baby his father's name, who was a convict, never to sadden an innocent heart of confidence with the gloom of prison at its cradle." What a grand apotheosis! "Yours in old love Irving." Old love? Old? Rotten! How could he suspect me of such stupidity as one should necessarily be possessed of in order to release ones captive without any reward!

A knock at door. Mrs. Combden opens and Dr. Pump-Nickel enters.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Mrs. Combden, I come in regard to your husband. He is not to be approached by logic any more.

Mrs. Combden (offering both hands). Dear Doctor, try all you can. You have always prided yourself with being his friend, show me your willingness to help him.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. But, madam, there is a difficulty. Where business starts, friendship ends. Your husband, not giving consent to the release, will not consider himself bound to the conditions of the bonds. I expect him to leave the city after his release from jail. You understand, madam, that, what might not be considered a big balm on affections, is a painful loss if spent on friendship.

Mrs. Combden. You consider my affections or his friendship?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Only your affections.

Mrs. Combden. You are very liberal. And you say that Irving would leave the city?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. No doubt. I know him.

Mrs. Combden. But I must first be entirely liberated from him.

Dr. Pump Nickel. Let that be my care. I shall be worthy of your affections.

Mrs. Combden (ironically). Irving was of your friendship.

Dr. Pump-Nickel (warmly). Where were my eyes so many years! My fortune cannot balance your affections. Madam, do not look with contempt at me. While my figure is not stately, my age not youthful, my lips not eloquent, my services as a friend are weighty. And my purse shall throw its contents to your feet the moment you have decided to shower your affections upon its owner, who not only admires the grace of your statue but worships the godly lustre of your mind.

Mrs. Combden. Enough, Doctor. Remember, I am a married woman.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. A married woman! Many a married woman has chosen a wrong lot. So have you. But it is not written in the stars, that a sad predestination has become her steady suitor and adviser. You are too smart as to believe in the rigmarole of such fairy tales. You are too much in love with the sparkling pleasure of life as to tie your fate to the wheels of a rusty wagon that might break down any moment and stop your joyful itinerancy. We are all born to enjoy life; all born to pluck the roses of happiness as we meet them. And a married woman is no exception to the rule. There is no sense in the moral, and no ethic in its observation. Love is the child of the impulse. Passion is its father and sympathy its mother. And do not try to stifle the child's nature.

Mrs. Combden. Doctor, pray, let us talk of something else.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Anything to please you. Let us talk of something else.

Mrs. Combden. Let us talk of Irving.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Rather—not, Mrs. Combden. We might return to you.

Mrs. Combden. Will you not do anything for him?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Impossible. He does not assent to the conditions.

Mrs. Combden. He will not deceive you.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. You cannot tell. This experience has certainly changed him radically. And it was for that reason that I wanted him to leave the city.

Mrs. Combden. Then it would be best to leave him in jail.—But no, no. That would be the worst thing of all.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Sure enough. He has already, necessarily and logically, become your bitterest enemy. Ah, he will not lovingly return into your arms; his face will not glory in smiling hope. His mind can be moved with but one thought, and that is: Revenge! You have plunged the man who generously had saved you— —

Mrs. Combden. Doctor!

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Pardon, madam. We are not strangers and you might permit me to talk freely. I need not express my sympathy in vain words; you have proofs of my friendship. With my assistance, you realized your ambition, and he married you. With my silence—you reached your next zeal and he was humiliated. I ask you, whether a friendship, like mine, be not worthy of greater gratitude than you show. And I ask you, whether a friendship, like mine, deserves such prudery as you think proper to receive me with. You are his wife, and you profess to love him. Perhaps you do love him; I think not. But your are his wife. You have a great deal to fear, for you are his enemy. Go and forgive him.

Mrs. Combden. No, no, never!

Dr. Pump-Nickel. If not, then it is desirable that you never meet. For—and I am going to tell you all I know—he has threatened to kill you.

Mrs. Combden. Mercy!

Dr. Pump-Nickel (pressing her hands warmly). Dear Mrs. Combden, how I pity you. But rely on me! I will help you.

Mrs. Combden. How I thank you.

Dr. Pump-Nickel (slowly laying arm round her waist). Dear Mrs. Combden, love needs no contract and freedom needs no seal.

Mrs. Combden. Oh, I am in such straits!

Dr. Pump-Nickel (kissing her hand, drawing her upon lounge). Be quiet, madam. You are young and beautiful. You have a natural right to enjoy life. For nature has provided you with all powers of fascinating and enjoying.

Mrs. Combden. But, Doctor, be silent.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Silent as reason paralyzed with passion (embrassing her violently). Silent as a worshipper mute from devotion (kneeling).

IV. ACT.

Garden in Country. Cottage nearby. Irving and Mrs. Combden sitting at table.

Irving. Forget the past. A new life will bring indescribable happiness.

Mrs. Combden. Oh, how I wish it!

Irving. Never have my intentions been so earnest as they are now. Don't hesitate. I never knew, how deeply I loved you but in the hour of my misery.

Mrs. Combden. If your love were half as true as mine, Irving!

Irving (laying down and grasping her hand). Give me that hand that has punished me. Oh, let me hope it will take me back! Let me hope, it will deliver into my keeping all the sacred privileges of love and happiness, and hold me dear as in the days of our first meetings. How cruelly cold have I been to you, when I was ready to throw my passions into your arms, and cry out in bitter tears of disappointed love.

Mrs. Combden. Yes, you embittered every hour of my life.

Irving. Forgive me. Let us return to our home and let me adore you day and night. Let me not go away from here alone and in despair. My heart is filled with remorse and my soul is beaten by my conscience. I feel strength and my heart is soft when I am with you and you smile and speak to me. But—when I am alone—thoughts of revenge tremble within me. Have mercy, Mildred!

Mrs. Combden. Love knows neither mercy nor law. And my hope and desire is to be reunited with you in happiness, and forever.

Irving. In happiness and forever! (Sits down and embraces her.) Forever! Oh, Mildred, when I was alone and the night had come with all its quietude, and

I was wide awake and dreamt of our future! How happy was I in my resolutions. I spoke to you and laughed with you and caressed you as though you were near me. And what sweet and melodious words you spoke to me! And then you cried bitterly over your mistake and my sufferings. You were all sympathy. And I joked and kissed those tears away.

Mrs. Combden (releasing herself from the embrace, leaving seat). Oh, Irving, if you but spoke the truth!

Irving. Don't doubt, my dear. My heart is yours and my life belongs to you. (Leaving seat.) But if it be decided between you and your people that you cannot love me, have the courage to speak. Tell me you cannot think of a reunion, you cannot forget my cruelty, you cannot believe my words, my oaths, my tears; tell me that we must part forever,—tell me it and be a free woman.

Mrs. Combden. We are so poor!

Irving. If love cares for no law, as you said before, it cares less for riches.

Mrs. Combden. But you were never moved by my tears.

Irving. Your tears burned my heart. Your sobs drove me mad. I longed for friendly words, for sympathetic laughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Worthington come out of House. At seeing Irving they show uneasiness.

Mr. Worthington. I did—not—expect—

Irving. I could not stay away. I came to ask Mildred to forgive and forget.

Mr. Worthington. To forgive and forget! Let me tell you that I consider—to speak with my heart on my tongue—that I consider all such talk ridiculous. You have brutally treated our daughter, and after getting a dose of your own medicine you are trying to play some foul trick.

Mrs. Worthington. Exactly.

Irving. That is hard.

Mr. Worthington. It is. But to treat you with any leniency is unnecessary.

Mrs. Worthington. Unnecessary.

Irving. I confess—I have sinned. But my intentions are good, and I want a chance to show them.

Mr. Worthington. I don't believe you, and my daughter has lost all faith in you.

Mrs. Worthington. Indeed.

Irving. Mildred, did you lose all faith in me?

Mrs. Combden (evasively). I really cannot answer now.

Irving. Mrs. Worthington, you are a mother. You know the responsibilities of a parent—

Mrs. Worthington. At present there can be no talk of a reconciliation. My poor Mildred is in too delicate a condition to return to the city and to resume the duties of a slavish housemaid. You are not able to surround her with such comfort as the restoration of her health requires. Let us begin to talk about it a few months later.

Irving. A few months! How easily it is said. A few months. Will not a week be sufficient to drive me mad? Why keep me in suspense? And a few months! And all the sleepless nights! No, no, have the courage to say the truth. You are standing between me and my child. I ask you, Mildred, can you not forgive, will you not return with me and forget?

Mrs. Combden. Let us abide by mother's wish.

Irving. Then I say good-by to you. (Going towards door.)

Mr. Worthington. One moment, Irving.

Irving (returning). But one moment.

Mr. Worthington. I cannot understand this sudden change of your mind and behavior. But I want to be fairer with you than you have been with me. Go, look for a decent position, and after you have found it, live with us. If you really love Mildred, show your confidence in her by turning over your earnings to her safekeeping.

Irving. Is that all you want?

Mr. Worthington. That is all. And if you are in earnest you will not object. I want to see for a few months, whether your behavior is worthy of any confidence from our family. In the same time I give you an opportunity to regain the respect and love of our daughter. But it must be understood that the legal proceedings have not been in vain, and that the bonds remain intact.

Irving. Stop!

Mr. Worthington. Very well. You can choose.

Irving. This is not a matter upon which you have to decide.

Mr. Worthington. Yet it is my will against your choice.

Irving. I never cared to enter the race with you. But if I determine to do it you shall find me ahead of you.

Mr. Worthington. I have nothing to say to you any more.

Mr. and Mrs. Worthington go into cottage.

Irving (approaching Mrs. Combden who hangs lantern on some trees). Mildred!

Mrs. Combden. You see I am powerless.

Irving. Forget. You might regret your stubborness. Think of our common child.

Mrs. Combden. What can I do?

Irving. Where is the baby?

Mrs. Combden. Under the care of a nurse.

Irving. Good-by! (leaves.)

Mrs. Combden looks at direction where Irving disappeared then goes into house, at entrance of which she meets Dr. Martin and Mishelle. Greeting they pass by.

Mishelle. They are just working my way, Doc. That fool of a brother has become such a willing tool in my hands, that I nearly forgot your work in my behalf.

Dr. Martin. Well, I have squared matters with Irving. He thought he had ruined my prestige by lifting

the veil from certain practices in the hospital. But I have ruined him. Yet your affairs do not concern me. And for the furtherance of your ambitions I have not raised a finger. Of course, Combden's bad luck might turn out to become your happy lot. And the work of his brother-in-law who felt himself ridiculed in the presence of Irving, helped my cause along.

Mishelle. You should watch the eagerness with which Gus swallows every insinuation I throw on Combden's name. Why, he seems to get intoxicated with every story calculated to tear Combden's character into fragments, to cover his reputation with mud. Delighted he runs with such tidings to his sister, and the result is—

Dr. Martin. The rising of some hopes in your mind.

Mishell. The appreciation of my philanthropic sentiments, and their growing contempt of Combden.

Dr. Martin. And that gives you hope?

Mishell (indignant). Have I not worked systematically? You don't doubt that my genius will carry me through?

Dr. Martin. A genius has original ways. Your system is shaky from age.

Mishell (insulted). I hope you are not becoming offensive.

Dr. Martin. Why should I! But lies are a poor foundation.

Mishell. Who says that but a liar!

Dr. Martin. No excitement, please. I don't care to hear that name Combden mentioned any more. And I surely am averse to all trouble.

Mishell. I guess you ought to be. The situation was becoming pretty hot.

Dr. Martin. Is it? We better go among some cooler headed people.

Exit into house.

Mishell (exited). Such an insult!

Miss Hennessey and Gus come out, evidently at odds.

Gus. Hello, Mishelle.

Mishelle. Glad to see you, Miss Hennessey.

Miss Hennessey. Very kind of you.

Gus. They are all waiting for you.

Mishelle. Why, indeed. Au revoir! (Exit into house.)

Miss Hennessey. You have grown so cold of late, Gus.

Gus. The trouble that wrecked the happiness of Mildred—

Miss Hennessey. You can't fool me, Gus. She has never been less troubled than since Irving's arrest. She has gained her object. Talk to me sense. I want to know the truth.

Gus. What do you want to know?

Miss Hennessey. The truth, I said.

Gus. And what's that?

Miss Hennessey. Indeed, that is strange to you.

Gus. Did you come to argue?

Miss Hennessey. I came to ask you this question. We were to be married in a few weeks. Did you change your mind?

Gus. This is a sudden question.

Miss Hennessey. Have you not enough courage to answer it? Shall I ask Mrs. Combden?

Gus. I will explain everything, Miss Hennesey.

Miss Hennessey. Miss Hennessey? And why not Kate?

Gus. Or Miss Kate.

Miss Hennessey (determined). If Miss Hennessey or Miss Kate be the same to you, it is not to me. And rather than be fooled by a simpleton like you, I throw your ring into your sullen face (takes ring from finger and throws it at him). How could I be so stupid. I and you a pair! Blessed I am that I found you out ere it was too late.

Gus. Enough or—

Miss Hennessey (in rage). Or! You dare to utter an offensive word to me, you dare to touch my

honor with your imbecile fury. Oh, were I a man! No longer should such perfidious serpents cover our paths; no longer would such a diabolical falsehood wear its head so high.

Gus (in threatening attitude). Miss Hennessey!

Miss Hennessey (approaching). Strike, coward. Here I stand, Mr. Worthington. Try your strength on a woman and you shall find a superior,

Gus rushes by and goes into house. Miss Hennessey stands triumphantly for a moment. then leaves the garden. Mrs. Combden and Mr. Mishelle appear and seat themselves with back to entrance of garden.

Mishelle. Indeed, quite an idea! To work in the city and come out here in the afternoon to spend the rest of the day.

Mrs. Combden. My brother does it. And he does not suffer any inconvenience.

Mishelle. The summer in the city is unbearable.

Mrs. Combden. You ought to imitate my brother.

Mishelle. Would you permit me to call here daily?

Mrs. Combden. Good company comforts the most dreary place.

Mishelle. You may be right. But what is your conception,—of good company?

Mrs. Combden. I look for the cheerful, the bright.

Mishelle. We own a wonderful assimilation of sentiments. I admire the well bred and witty.

Irving enters garden. At seeing the couple at table he slowly walks up near them and sits down behind tree.

Mrs. Combden. And I may as well confess, Mr. Mishelle, your company is very promising. My father has learned to respect you, and the friendship of my brother for you is unbounded.

Mishelle (delighted). Your father's respect—ah, I have done everything with the view to gaining it. Your words are very encouraging.

Mrs. Combden. But, then—you care as well for my opinion of you.

Mishelle. I have your invitation to call as often as I wish.

Mrs. Combden. Don't fear to come too often.

Mishelle. My intention is settled. If there be a suitable hotel in the neighborhood, you shall find in me your most ardent admirer and companion. We shall row, ride, and swim together, and—

Mrs. Combden. But in the face of the world, Mr. Mishelle, I must ask you to restrain the display of your sentiments.

Mishelle (taking her hand). My sentiments—

Mrs. Combden. In the face of the world I appear as Mrs. Combden.

Mishelle. You ought to bear a worthier name than that. The man who makes a woman unhappy is a wilful criminal. But his record—

Mrs. Combden. Now, his record is clear. At least, nobody can say he has committed an unlawful act. And by that one is to be judged.

Mishelle. Quite right, Mrs. Combden. But you are not the first woman he betrayed. Among his friends a story circulates—about a girl he left in very precarious circumstances.

Mrs. Combden. I never heard the full truth about it.

Mishelle. And I will not be cruel enough to relate it to you. But the circumstances that resulted in his discharge from the hospital—

Mrs. Combden. Gus told me that he was dishonorably discharged, but I can't believe it.

Mishelle. One of the directors told me it personally—

Mrs. Combden. Dr. Martin?

Mishelle. No, no, that must remain a secret. I have given my word of honor.

Mrs. Combden. Oh, what a life, what a past!

Mishelle. Forget it!

Mrs. Combden. No, I must not forget it. They say: experience is no teacher; the more one experiences the more ready is one for other failures. It shall not be so if I can help it. And I shall not forget.

Mishelle. Then abandon all pleasures that invigorate and animate body and soul.

Mrs. Combden. Abandon pleasures? No, no. I will seek them, and embrace every opportunity for joy and happiness.

Mishelle. I knew it.

Mrs. Combden. But I shall not tie myself to any promises.

Mishelle. Still you may find one worthy of your affections.

Mrs. Combden. I don't doubt.

Mishelle. So you will leave a space in your heart—open for Cupid's arrows?

Mrs. Combden. Oh, Mr. Mishelle, a woman like me—with a child and without a fortune—half bound yet to a man—to a hus—

Mishelle (leaning over to her). Well directed efforts overcome all obstacles.

Mrs. Combden (rising). I fear, they might suspect something if we stayed here too late. Please, go in. I'll soon follow.

Mishelle. So abruptly! But you shall always find me to be obedient. (Goes into house.)

Mrs. Combden walks into rear of garden and, as it has become dark, takes a lantern down to light it, whereupon she turns around and sees Irving. The lantern falls to the ground and Mrs. Combden utters a cry as if in fright.

Irving (stepping quickly toward her). Calm down, Mrs. Combden. I am not here to arouse your sentiments.

Mrs. Combden. I—did—not—expect—you.

Irving. Certainly not, my dear. But I came. What a fool, what a knave am I? And my visit (ironically), the visit of that man, that husband, to whom you are half bound, shall be a blessing to you. Just grant me a few minutes conversation.

Mrs. Combden. Come in the house.

Irving. Why leave the beautiful stillness, the holy kindness of nature for the sake of the profane merriment of the parlor? Are the eyes of the stars not truer than the looks of your friends, the mumblings of the leaves not softer than the braggings of simpletons? But I don't want to keep you too long from your new acquisition.

Mrs. Combden. My new acquisition?

Irving. Please, my love, sit down. I want everything that may lead to an unpleasant scene—excluded. Sit down.

Mrs. Combden. I prefer to stand.

Irving (imperative). Sit down! (Taking her by the arm and leading her to chair previously occupied by her.) Sit down on this chair with its hopeful recollections. (He presses her mildly down on chair.) And now listen. Are we still man and wife?

Mrs. Combden. How can you question it?

Irving. Answer yes or no. Are we man and wife?

Mrs. Combden. Yes—but—

Irving. But what?—

Mrs. Combden. The law—

Irving. The law is crooked. The law is a bribe; a blackmailer; the law is senseless. Leaving the law aside, answer me in the language of human sentiment and reason; are we husband and wife?

Mrs. Combden. Yes.—

Irving. Have both parties to the contract some duties to perform?

Mrs. Combden. Certainly, both.

Irving. Are you willing to resume your duties?

Mrs. Combden. I am.

Irving. And you know your duties?

Mrs. Combden. My duty at present is to be faithful.

Irving. To be faithful. And what does that mean? To store your body away for my use—in some future day—against your will?

Mrs. Combden. No, it means to be faithful with soul and body.

Irving. With soul and body? A big, fine, but empty shell. Are your thoughts directed to the sphere of equal happiness of man and woman? Is your husband's comfort as great a part of your desires as is your own?

Mrs. Combden. I constantly think of you.

Irving (ironically). What a sacrifice! To think of me! How happy it makes me! And you are willing to show me the seriousness of your affections by resuming your duties as my wife?

Mrs. Combden. At present—I fear—I dare not.

Irving. Exactly. Whoever dares not be faithful don't love his duty. The duty that is burdensome cannot be desirable. Whoever dislikes the duty hates the person to whom the duty extends. Alas, Mrs. Combden! Not a word. I am not here to be deceived, but to convince you of your inability to do it. I have come here with the object to offer you all my help—to secure your full freedom by legal means. I was resolved to forgive you the low insults you have heaped upon me,—led to such vulgar methods by vulgar calculation and association. But you still dared to lie, you still cling to hypocrisy and slyness, you still insult my faith with treasonable promises. (Takes out a revolver and puts it on the table. Mrs. Combden wants to rise and flee. Quickly Irving holds hand over her mouth and pulls her softly down on seat.) Don't shriek, and collect your nerves! Here is a pencil

and paper. Write down every word I will dictate. That will make you free—legally free, as you wish it.

Mrs. Combden falls on knees. but Irving raises her an l seats her.

Irwing. Not a word. Write! (puts pencil in her hand.) "I, Mildred Worthington, who married Irving Combden through trickery,"—write every word, I say. Don't delay the moment of your liberation, "who never loved him, who had sworn false oaths to deceive him, I declare herewith, that I have to-night given him proofs of my dishonesty" (seizing pistol) unless you copy every word without hesitation!—"of my dishonesty in a conversation held by me and one Mishelle, in which I expressed my contempt for Irving Combden, and my satisfaction at his underserved humiliation as well as my desire for the company of said Mishelle." Now sign your name. (Takes paper, reads it, meanwhile watching Mrs. Combden). This liberates you from me. I am going to leave the city and shall never cross your path again. To satisfy you, I shall send you the divorce papers in a short time. But one thing I never shall forget. And that is the child. Remember that well. Watch over its safety, let it never suffer. If any thing should happen, if anything should befall the child, due to your carelessness and neglect—I will hold you responsible. Remember that. Good-by!

Walks quickly toward entrance to garden.

Mrs. Combden (quickly running toward the cottage). Help! Murder! Help!

Irving (turns and shoots). This was your last chance at deceit (disappears.)

Mrs. Combden has fallen to ground. Mr. and Mrs. Worthington, Gus, Mishelle, Dr. Martin run out in confusion.

Mrs. Worthington (over body of Mrs. Combden). Mildred, my angel!

Mrs. Combden. Irving—shot——me.

Gus. After him!

Mishelle. Revenge!

Follow in direction of Irving.

Mr. Worthington (trembling). Doctor, help!

Dr. Martin (examining). She is beyond the reach of science.

Mrs. Worthington. No, no, o Lord, can you punish a mother so hard! No, no, Doctor, her hand is warm yet, she is not dead, not dead; it cannot be, it must not be. Mildred, Mildred. How could it be! (fainting).

V. ACT.

A room decorated with floral offerings. In the centre a table set with winebottles, dishes, and bouquets. Ruby Hart. Cutler. Dr. Pump-Nickel.

Cutler. This greeting of his friends gathered here to-night to extend to him their full sympathy and love shall repay him for all the days of martyrdom he suffered from his matrimonial adventure.

Miss Hart. And let us from now on hold together the tie of good comradeship that arises from our mutual understanding of the individual welfare. We who see in the human being not a means for exploitation and in the sexes not a mere means for a game of conquest—we must seriously go to work and aid each other, uplift each other, console each other.

Cutler (pressing her hand). And never feel insulted at the jests from our friends.

Miss Hart. But what I cannot comprehend in this game of the sexes, is that the refinement of a woman should not shrink from publicly displaying disgraceful scandals, that a womans' kindness, soft as it naturally is, should delight in the rabbles craving for gossip.

Cutler. Well, well. Could you really think that a woman that uses such means possesses any refinement save that of the garment? These creatures buy everything, have everything made to order—they do not make their own character, they never cultivate their mind with a view to ennobling it, they never elevate their soul above the level of animal instincts.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Talking of delight. Why, she delights in her work. Mrs. Combden never passes a mirror without looking in to find herself the heroine. And how did she love him and does she love him, she

declares, and how did she conquer herself in order to put him in prison! But he deserved it, for he was a fool, a brute, a scoundrel or—I don't know what not she calls him.

Miss Hart. But you took his part and defended him against such abusive language?

Dr. Pump-Nickel. Who was it that released our friend? Was it not his best friend, the doctor? How could you doubt my sincerity? But she does not care for anybody's feelings. The torrent of her language sweeps ones interruption away.

Cutler. How I longed to see her, to speak to her and lay open her faults, her misconduct, her perfidy, her sins. Under the lashes of my anger she should have experienced a chastisement more cruel than bodily punishment can administer. But they did not face me. They did not call me to the Courtroom. Cowards that they are, they smelled the truth and kept away from me.

Litchfield and Irving arrive. Irving sits down without taking notice of anybody.

Litchfield (to Cutler). Not a word. Comes to me, takes me out—and not a word.

Ruby Hart (to Irving). Mr. Combden, do not grieve. The stories they have circulated about you find no listener among us.

Cutler. And now, Irving, forget the past and let's make up. Everything is ready for a merry evening.

Irving. For a merry evening!

Cutler. Let us sit down at the table, and, like in the days of our old friendship, unite in confidence for a new purpose, a greater ambition, a loftier future.

Irving (rising and looking around). And no Judas among us?

Miss Hart. All friends.

(Irving fixes Dr. Pump-Nickel and turns away from the table.)

Cutler. And with the force of the law we shall redeem everything.

Irving (laughing angrily). My arm settles the law.

Cutler. Will you permit the law to hold you in bonds?

Irving. No, sir, I will ignore it as a man.

Cutler. Nonsense. He who ignores the law is crushed by it.

Irving. And he who prays to it is often killed.

Cutler. But master is the man who fights with it.

Irving. And who submits to masters is a slave.

Cutler. The law can heal as she can wound.

Irving. Who waits for cruel kindness is a fool.

Cutler. The man who wants his rights in the community must take it from its hands.

Irving. The individual's right or wrong squares best the individual act.

Cutler. What is the individual in the maze of a community?

Irving. The less he counts, the lower is the weight of the community wherein he lives. No pride of manhood means no people's honor.

Cutler. Keep right within the boundaries of law and you will reap reward and honor.

Irving. And trick and cheat and lie. Fear neither perjury nor shrink from treason.

Cutler. That is not law.

Irving. I say, it is. The statutes of the law are masked frauds, the judges are prejudiced lies, the jurors accommodating perjurers.

Cutler. I know, try as I may, I am neither eloquent nor wise enough to convince you of your mistaken course. But I am sincere. I beg you to have mercy with yourself and listen to my practical advice. And everything shall be settled to everybody's satisfaction.

Litchfield. And let us assure you, Irving, that the reputation of Mrs. Combden will not be injured.

Irving. That can not be injured.

Litchfield. For I may as well tell you, my friends, that Irving accused himself of having maltreated her of whose love he was convinced.

Miss Hart. Impossible!

Cutler. Are you still laboring under that delusion, Irving?

Irving. It was a mistake. Had I understood Uncle Henri, I should have been cured long ago. But now let us drink to the memory of Judas!

Miss Hart. Of Judas!

Irving fills the glasses. They seat themselves.

Irving. To the memory of Judas, who ever in history has been the best friend of those—wielding the greatest influence on legitimate corruption. Your health, Doctor! (all look with surprise at each other.)

Dr. Pump-Nickel (emptying glass and filling the glasses). And here to the memory of Othello who offers a romantic excuse to those whose jealousy stamps their best friends with treason.

Cutler. Well can one afford to drink to the memory of Othello, who knows that Judas was there. But I refuse to drink with one who knows it and excuses Judas.

Dr. Pump-Nickel. As far as I am concerned, my dear friends, let it be known that I am at a loss to understand—

Irving (interrupting). How we dare to mention Judas in your presence?

Cutler (applauding). Well, well!

Dr. Pump-Nickel. I am at a loss to understand how such insinuations—

Irving (interrupting). As the connections between you and Judas—

Dr. Pump-Nickel (rising). How such insinuations can be hurled at me. For I have always acted—

Irving (as above, mocking) as a gentleman.

Cutler. As a business man.

Irving. Sit down, Doctor. To the memory of one that's gone! To the memory of a deluded soul that's out of our reach! To the memory of a mutual friend that had so much to thank you for, Doctor, that it broke her heart. (Throws glass to floor.)

All rise in excitement. Irving goes to rear, takes a few tablets from a bottle, swallows them, returns to table and fills a glass.

Irving. This glass I empty alone. Parting as I will from you all and go away and never return, it befits me to swallow the bitter pill of destruction alone.

Miss Hart. Oh, pray, Mr. Combden, explain! I fear, lest some harm may befall you!

Irving. Oh, I feel well, my dear. Never felt any better. But I must freely speak to Judas. You knew, Doctor, that Ruby was looking for me, and you did not tell me. You knew that my wife's intentions were to put me in jail and you were silent. And when I was arrested in your office the noble Worthington called you a gentleman.

Cutler. You played two roles and played them fairly well. But your duplicity is unmasked.

Miss Hart. And now I understand! Oh, what a miserable fool!

Dr. Pump-Nickel. And this deserves a man who helps his friends. It's all a mistake. But unable to convince you now, I withdraw. (Exit.)

Irving. You do well, wretch! We are all friends. There is not a face in this room, that is not dear to my heart, that does not awake the memory of sorrowless and happy days. You Cutler, have much to forgive me, also you, Ruby. But you both are noble and you love me. Will you remain true to me and bear my memory with love after you will be told that the man whom you

thought was not able to commit any act of cruelty, that this man had committed—murder!

Miss Hart (shrieking in despair). Murder!

Cutler and Litchfield (running to him). Irving, are you mad!

Irving. Friends, I am well. They will soon be here and take me away. We never will be together again, we never will enjoy listening to friendly voices—sitting together, friend and friend. Let us not lose any time. Here's a note that would explain a great deal if she were alive. But she is dead. And it must be torn. I wanted to free her, but she deceived me at the very moment I freed her from me, and, as though I were a piece of game, yelled out to the bloodhounds to chase me. (Tears up the note and burns it over gas jet.)

Miss Hart (fainting). Irving, Irving! Again!

Cutler. You are weak, Irving.

Litchfield. You are so pale. Your eyes look so peculiar.

Irving. I feel well, very well. Ring for a messenger.

Litchfield rings bell.

Irving. Let me write a few lines.

Writes and folds paper. Litchfield and Cutler are busy over Ruby Hart; they revive her. Messenger enters, receives note and withdraws.

Irving. Ruby!

Miss Hart. Can I help you? My reason forsakes me.

Irving. I am getting weaker.

Cutler and Litchfield lead him to lounge.

Ruby Hart (sits near him, and Irvings head leans on her shoulders). Keep up your courage. We will not

leave you. Whatever may happen, your friends shall be with you.

Irving. I know it. (Closing eyes.) When I left the shore in a stout boat, the sails filled with a mild breeze, the sun was shining on a laughing blue sky and the birds were flying in their innocent happiness above and around me. All made merry and I was laughing with them. But I had not left the bay yet, we were not thrust to the mercy of the ocean yet, when, black as the Pest, a threatening cloud drew over the sun and with the rapidity of an eagle had soon covered the sky. Gray as the motionless, pitiless stone lay the waters grave. Then swept a yelling, rageful gale upon us as though Hades had spit out a million of avaricious birds with wings of iron to devour us, and a murderous storm chastised the sea that the waves beamed up in pain and haste and flew upon us and around us like bloodthirsty serpents with white poison in their muttering and mumbling mouths. All looked for safety but I, all heeded the warnings of their friends but I, who listened to Judas. And hardly had I recognized my dangerous position and was ready to escape to the pilots of my friends, when a squall grasped me and washed me down to the bottom of the sea. But now—the sky—is laughing again,—and the water is calm and innocent.

Miss Hart. Be quiet, you need rest.

Irving. I soon—will—rest. Soon—and we never, never can— —talk to each other.

Cutler. Nonsense, my good fellow. Hope! The glorious days will return.

Irving. Never, she is— —dead. And—oh! my—baby!

Litchfield. Be quiet!

Miss Hart. How cold he is!

Cutler. Let him fall asleep. It is a nervous collapse.

Litchfield (opening door). Doctor! Please, Doctor!

Dr. Pump-Nickel. What is it? Ha, what a peculiar pallor!

Cutler. Speak, man!

Dr. Pump-Nickel examines Irving. Bell rings. Two Officers of the Police enter.

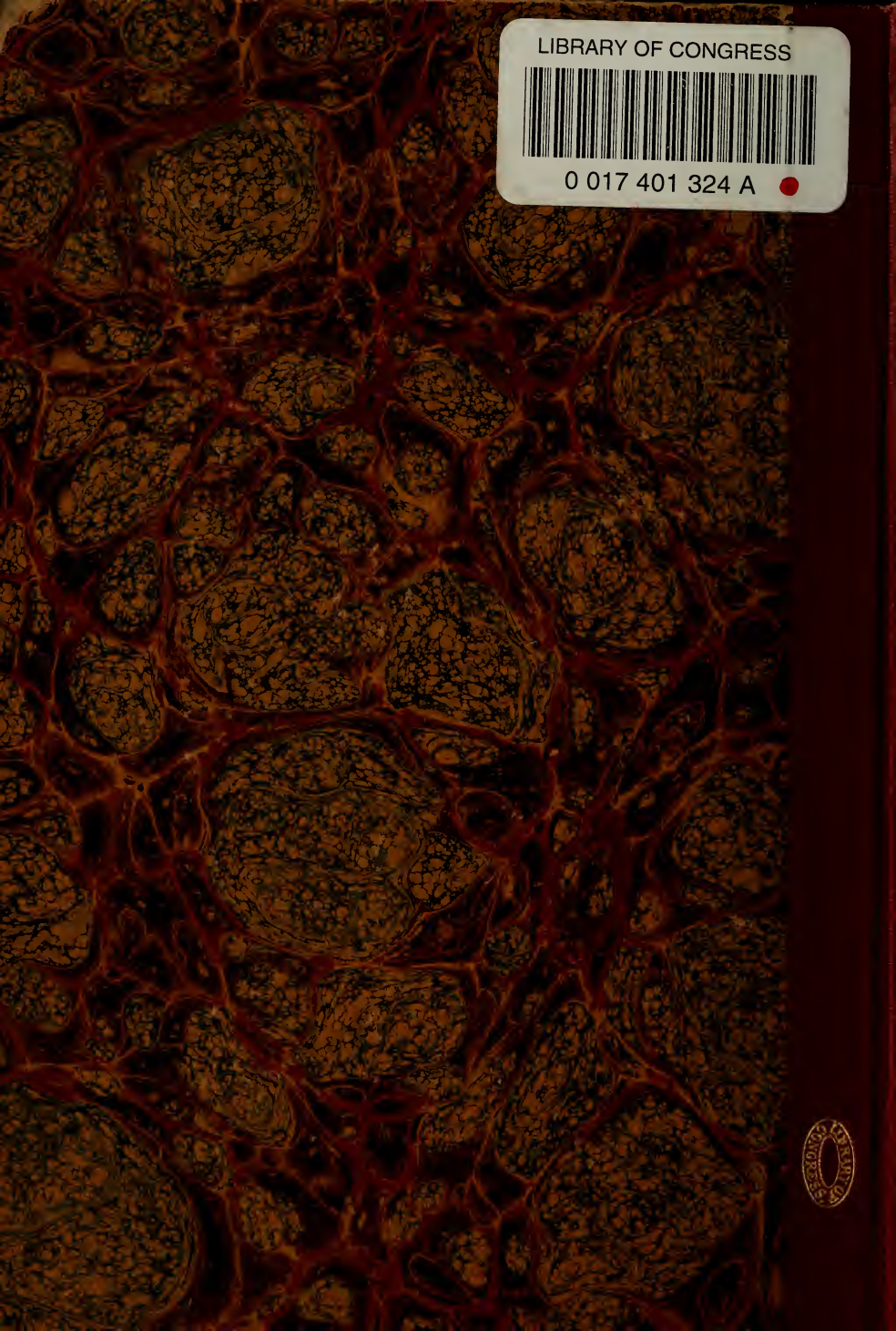
Officer (with fixed revolver). Mr. Irving Combden!

Dr. Pump-Nickel. He is dead!

A cry of pain, arising simultaneously, from the friends of Irving goes through the room.

Cutler. Farewell, my friend. You did submit at last. (To officer.) Such is the work of fate, when you step forth.

CURTAIN.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